



It is not common for a meeting to begin in a cemetery, but that is just how this uncommon Chapter began. Standing in a circle around the graves of Brothers who labored before us, the participants were able to make a powerful connection between past and future work.

All 55 attendees were divided into four committees for the Chapter work sessions: Brothers' Life, Educational Mission, Leadership and Structure of Educational Works, and Regional and Overseas Apostolate/Stewardship. A fifth committee, comprised of some already on the other committees, met at the close of the Chapter to incorporate the suggestions of participants into two documents endorsed by the Chapter, the "Context for Action/Action Plan". They shared in lively and often times animated discussions as they all participated in the development of legislation to be presented at the General Assembly. The entire event – a blending of prayer, committee meetings, General Assembly sessions, and the sharing of meals – further served to unify all who attended. Lay Partners began to know that they were no longer just observers of this process which was new to them, but rather full participants with growing responsibilities.

Signs of Faith staff members, Brother George Van Grieken and Cathy Locke, asked representatives from each of the committees to discuss their feelings about, and reactions to, this historic event. The representatives interviewed were: Martin Farfan and Brother James Meegan from Cathedral High School, John Scudder from Sacred Heart Cathedral Preparatory, Carole Swain from Saint Mary's College, and Brother Thomas Westberg from De La Salle High School.

Interview

Cathy Locke: *What are your reflections regarding the inclusion of Partners in this Chapter?*

Brother James Meegan: Having Partners at this meeting was a very important development in our history, as the Institute grows in the realization that our Partners are very much involved and, in fact, do most of the work. The involvement of Partners was really a recognition of their work.

Carole Swain: As Partners, we talked about the influence that we had on the conversations in our various committees, related to the theme of connectivity – connecting students with the Brothers' work from the beginning of their education and on into college. Our conversations were deep

and meaningful. We felt so welcomed and part of a family. It was an interesting opportunity, and a significant moment in helping to plan for the future. The first few days, I was in awe of how much Brother David and the Leadership Team have done to make the District financially secure and able to expand its works when the Brothers are shrinking in numbers. But by the second and third days, when our committee work started, I felt a responsibility by all of us there. I did not feel it was the Brothers and me; I felt we were doing it together. It is impressive to see what the Leadership Team has done; it was a class act, to tell you the truth! It gave you a sense of security from which you could work. With the plans we made, I felt we could dream and create ideas that could happen.

Cathy: *Can you give us an idea of how the groundwork set at the last Convocation was able to bring ideas into formation at this District Chapter?*

John Scudder: At the Convocation, we had talked about how to get teachers and other Partners to become part of the Lasallian world experience; to go beyond our own District. The idea of having teachers go to India and other countries where the Brothers